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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CDA PRAISED FOR EFFORTS BY PRO-REGIME
DAILY

¶1. (U) SUMMARY. On August 2, the managing editor-in-chief of the pro-government "Akhbar Al-Youm," praised the U.S. Charge d'Affaires, the U.S. embassy's press release upon his arrival, and the anticipated return of the American scholarship program in 2008. In particular, the editor-in-chief, Asim Al-Bilal Al-Tayyeb, complimented CDA Fernandez on his cultural and linguistic knowledge, his recent visit to flood-affected areas such as Kordofan, and "his statements and actions which are not hostile." Al-Tayyeb also noted that the CDA is "almost Sudanese," as he speaks Arabic, conducts interviews on "Al-Jazeera," and is originally from Cuba, "which is very close to the Middle East [in terms of culture.]" END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) On July 29, CDA Fernandez met with Professor Mahmud Hassan Ahmad, the Director General of the National Center for Diplomatic Studies. (NOTE: The CDA was not previously informed of the presence of the press at the meeting. END NOTE.)

¶3. (U) Al-Tayyeb opened the column saying that he requested an interview for his publication, "Akhbar Al-Youm," from the CDA at this meeting. Al-Tayyeb writes that he was surprised to learn that the CDA knew of his publication and read it on a daily basis. Al-Tayyeb then requested an interview from the CDA, and according to the column, the Charge apologized saying that a lot of newspapers have requested interviews from him. According to Al-Tayyeb, the CDA stated that he needs more time to study the reality of Sudan and its mass media.

¶4. (U) Al-Tayyeb complimented the CDA's press-release issued upon his arrival. According to Al-Tayyeb, the CDA acknowledged the difficult nature of his job in Sudan, but he looks forward to an open dialogue with an open heart to improve Sudanese-American relations. He then states, "We knew Alberto before his arrival through Arab satellite television and [we knew of] his ability to speak Arabic which will open a dialogue with the society." Al-Tayyeb also expressed his appreciation for the CDA's visit to Kordofan to see the victims of flooding, adding that the Charge's statements and actions are not hostile.

¶5. (U) Al-Tayyeb, ends his piece saying that "we thanked the Charge and we support him in improving Sudanese-American relations, which will depend on exchanging different points of view." He also expressed his hope that the American University program would be reinstituted in Sudan, in order that Sudanese citizens "might learn from American advanced technology."